

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A contents distribution apparatus for distributing contents to a client, comprising: an apparatus for collecting 5 the contents access situation information from a client; and means for analyzing the contents access trends based on the collected access situation information.

2. The contents distribution apparatus as defined in claim 1, further comprising means for predicting contents expected to be in demand in the future, based on the analyzed access trends.

3. The contents distribution apparatus as defined in Claim 2, comprising an apparatus for acquiring contents predicted to be in demand in the future.

4. The contents distribution apparatus as defined in any one of Claims 2 or 3, further comprising an apparatus for receiving contents meta-information, i.e., additional information required to classify the contents, wherein the means for predicting the contents predicts the contents 20 expected to be in demand in the future, based on the access trends and the meta-information.

5. An apparatus for distributing contents to a client, comprising:

an apparatus for collecting contents access situation

25 information from the client;

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an apparatus for analyzing contents access trends based  
on the contents access situation information;

an apparatus for transmitting the contents access trends  
to a server which predicts contents expected to be in demand  
5 in the future based on the contents access trends and  
transmits the contents; and

an apparatus for receiving the contents expected to be  
in demand in the future from the server.

6. An apparatus for distributing contents to a client,  
comprising:

an apparatus for collecting contents access situation  
information from the client;

an apparatus for transmitting the contents access  
situation information to a server which analyzes contents  
access trends based on the contents access situation  
information, predicts contents expected to be in demand in  
the future based on the contents access trends and transmits  
a list of the contents predicted;

an apparatus for receiving the list of the contents from  
20 the server; and

an apparatus for acquiring the contents based on the  
list of contents.

7. An apparatus for distributing contents to a client,  
comprising:

25 an apparatus for collecting contents access situation  
information from the client;

an apparatus for transmitting the contents access situation information to a server which analyzes contents access trends based on the contents access situation information, predicting contents expected to be in demand in the future and transmits the contents predicted; and

an apparatus for receiving the contents expected to be in demand in the future from the server.

8. An apparatus for distributing contents to a client, comprising:

a database for recording information for distinguishing a client and recording permission information concerning distribution of contents to the client;

a database access apparatus;

an authentication apparatus for authenticating the client and acquiring the information for distinguishing the client;

an apparatus for receiving the permission information concerning distribution of contents to the client from a server which manages distribution permission information;

an apparatus for requesting acquisition of permission to distribute the contents from the server to the client; and

an apparatus for distributing the contents to the client, wherein:

the client distinguishing information is acquired by the authentication apparatus when contents distribution request is received from the client,

the distribution permission information of the contents  
is checked for the client distinguishing information by the  
database access apparatus,

5 the contents are distributed to the client by the  
contents distribution apparatus when the distribution is  
permitted,

a request is made to acquire permission to distribute  
the contents from the server to the client by the apparatus  
for requesting acquisition of permission when the  
distribution is not permitted, and

10 the permission information concerning distribution of  
contents to the client is written by the database access  
apparatus onto the database for recording permission  
information, and the contents are distributed to the client  
by the contents distribution apparatus, when the apparatus  
for receiving the permission information receives permission  
15 to distribute the contents to the client from the server.

9. The apparatus as defined in Claim 8, wherein:

20 the contents are encrypted and an entry which registers  
the decryption key of the contents exists in the database,  
and the server manages the decryption key, the apparatus  
further comprises:

an apparatus for requesting the decryption key from the  
server;

25 an apparatus for receiving the decryption key from the  
server; and

an apparatus for distributing the decryption key to the client,

wherein:

when distribution of the contents to the client is  
5 permitted and the decryption key is registered in the database, the decryption key is distributed to the client by the apparatus for distributing the decryption key,

when distribution of the contents to the client is  
permitted and the decryption key is not registered in the  
database, the decryption key is requested from the server by  
the apparatus for requesting the decryption key, received by  
the apparatus for receiving the decryption key, registered in  
the database by the database access apparatus, and  
distributed to the client by the apparatus for distributing  
the decryption key, and

when distribution of the contents to the client is not  
permitted, the apparatus for receiving the permission  
information receives the distribution permission, and the  
database access apparatus writes the permission information  
20 onto the permission information concerning the distribution  
of the contents in the database,

the decryption key is requested from the server by the  
apparatus for requesting the decryption key, received from  
the server by the apparatus for receiving the decryption key,  
25 registered in the database by the database access apparatus,

and distributed to the client by the apparatus for distributing the decryption key.

10. The contents distribution apparatus defined in Claim 1, wherein both a first contents distribution apparatus 5 and a second contents distribution apparatus are the contents distribution apparatus,

wherein:

the first contents distribution apparatus transmits first contents acquired from a neighboring server to the second contents distribution apparatus, and

the second contents distribution apparatus transmits second contents acquired from a neighboring server to the first contents distribution apparatus.

11. The contents distribution apparatus as defined in Claim 1, further comprising an apparatus for determining a deletion timing of the contents acquired using the contents access situation information.